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Some general information about foreign study for high school students, and source listings where more specific information may be found, make up this report. Information on three different program types, choice of a foreign study program, planning and operating one's own program, advantages of foreign study, and establishing program standards is included. An appendix also offers a reprint of an article on evaluation criteria for foreign study programs covering sponsorship, student recruitment, group leader selection, study, living abroad, and financial consideration. (AF)

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Number 5

Foreign Study for High School Students: What's Going On?

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FOREIGN STUDY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: WHAT'S GOING ON?

Until only a few years ago, "foreign study" consisted principally of the Junior Year Abroad for a few hundred college students or the mixed travel and study undertaken in summers by a relatively small number of teachers. Today, not only have the numbers of students and teachers in these two categories increased dramatically, but high-school students, too, are traveling to foreign countries, presumably for study. Their excursions occur principally in the summer, for periods which usually range from six to ten weeks, and involve dozens of programs and thousands of participants.

In the interest of these thousands and the additional thousands of potential student travelers, their teachers, their parents, and their schools, this report proposes to look anew at the whole situation.

Kinds of Programs

In spite of differences in stated goals, in methods of recruitment of participants and staff members, in living arrangements while in the foreign country, and in the emphasis placed upon study and travel, the programs for secondary school students fall into three general categories: (1) national or regional service-type programs of various durations; (2) programs organized by an individual or by a school; and (3) commercial (or quasi-commercial "non-profit") programs.

The first category includes the programs of the American Field Service, the Experiment in International Living, Youth for Understanding, and similar organizations, which, for the most part, provide well-qualified staff and are careful in selecting their participants and the homes into which they will go. These programs usually provide orientation for their participants and require some linguistic preparation, at least for programs in commonly visited countries. However, they select relatively few students.

Programs in the rapidly growing second group are usually organized by an interested teacher of language or of the humanities, or by a secondary school – occasionally by two or more schools together. The quality varies considerably, depending upon the experience, ability, and dedication of the staff members and upon the financial resources available.

The third general category includes programs advertising study-tours and temporary overseas schools, administered in some cases by commercial agencies which make no claim to being "non-profit" organizations. This third group is usually eager for student participants and for staff members who will enroll students. At present, this group sends abroad the majority of high school students.

It is quite possible that these programs, commercial or non-profit, which appeal to students and teachers through colorful, professionally prepared brochures, may be better run than some programs directed by altruistic teachers for their own students, but, unfortunately, many of them are carelessly operated. They do, however, have one advantage: any student who has the price can enroll. And frequently any teacher who can recruit the required number of paying students can enjoy a free or inexpensive summer in a foreign country.

Choosing a Foreign Study Program

If a student or school can find an existing program, compatible with predetermined goals, interests, and needs, which is well organized and carefully run, then it is likely that the student, the school, and the host country will profit by participating in the existing program. If a suitable program cannot be found, the school might consider joining with another school (or several schools) to provide a program, thereby avoiding duplication of effort, and reducing competition for the available study sites in the foreign country, which is rapidly becoming a serious problem.

The following is a minimal reading list for anyone making a decision about foreign study for high school students:

1. *A Guide to Institutional Self-Study and Evaluation of Educational Programs Abroad,* available for $1.00 from the CIEE (cited in Appendix A). A thorough guide, including a number of questions that each institution should answer for itself about any program being considered. At the end is an extremely useful bibliography.
2. "Criteria for Evaluating Foreign Study Programs for High School Students," *Foreign Language Annals,* I, 4 (May 1968), pp. 288-290 (reprinted here as Appendix B and available in quantity from the Materials Center, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011). A concise, up-to-date statement by Stephen A. Freeman, Director of the Language Schools at Middlebury College. The statement carries the endorsement of the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
3. *Foreign Language Teaching: Challenges to the Profession,* Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, G. Reginald Bishop, Jr., ed. (1965). A thorough and helpful outline and discussion will be found on pp. 23-53 of these Reports, "Study Abroad." The Reports are available in many libraries, or can be obtained for $3.00 from the Materials Center, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

Planning and Operating Your Own Program

If you decide to plan your own program, the sources listed above offer an excellent starting point. Take advantage of the suggestions of successful directors and student participants, and avoid the pitfalls and difficulties already encountered by other programs. Here are some pointers:

A. Design your program with clear-cut, realistic goals.

B. Don't forget that fluency in speaking and understanding the language of the host country is extremely important to cultural understanding. Language study or linguistic ability may be secondary to the other objectives of your program – nevertheless, language is the only effective key to many aspects of "anthropological" culture. Students should be encouraged to avoid the use of English and to stretch their linguistic "muscles" to meet their needs.

C. Plan travel in the foreign countries *at the end* of the study program, to take the greatest possible advantage of the student's increased linguistic ability and awareness, and to interfere as little as possible with the academic program. This also permits the students to get a deeper understanding of the region or section of their host country where the study program is located.

D. Try to allow the individual students to live with families, subject to the normal rules and regulations applied to young people in that family.

E. Arrange to have a local representative at the site where most of the study is to be done. A representative who understands the purposes of your program and is respected by the community, can be invaluable in making protocol arrangements in the community, in locating families to board students, in selecting local people to help with the academic program, and so on.

F. Select the supervising and teaching staff with great care. If possible, choose persons who know the foreign language well and who have traveled or studied extensively in the country. Break in personnel new to the country or program as assistants to experienced staff.

G. Protect both the staff and students with a thorough orientation before their arrival, and with good insurance programs.

H. In addition to legal and financial safeguards, make clear-cut rules to help insure the students' physical and moral well-being.

I. Offer the students a good, intensive academic program. Plan *at least* three or four hours daily of formal study. Properly organized and taught in a stimulating manner, such a program will have the students asking for more. Most students who elect to spend their money on foreign study and give up a summer of social activity at home become bored and begin to complain if they are allowed too much free time.

J. Encourage the students to spend as much time as possible with their foreign friends, *not with each other.* Discourage dating or "pairing-off" – provide many opportunities for group activities (games, singing, dancing, movies) with young people from the host country.

K. Take advantage of professional services (such as those offered by the Council on International Exchange) for transportation, both outside and inside the host country.

L. In each country, after the program has been completed, seek the help of both the staff and the participants in evaluating your efforts and improving the program for the next group.

What Is The Evidence?

Unfortunately there is little "hard" evidence of the advantages foreign study and travel has conferred on high school students, most of whom have studied abroad for only a few weeks. Some schools give credits for foreign study, but the students participating seldom need extra high school credits. Anyone who has seen students returning from a good foreign study program, babbling easily in the foreign language, full of new ideas concerning the country where they have studied, and looking at their own country and countrymen with fresh perspective, has little doubt about the lasting impact of the program on those students. But few programs do more than ask the students if they feel that they have benefited from the experience.

To obtain more hard evidence, we can give participants pre-tests and post-tests concerning their attitudes toward fellow Americans, toward minority groups, toward "different" people, and toward the inhabitants and the institutions of the country in which they have studied. If language study has been an important part of the program, pre-tests and post-tests in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing will show whether significant progress has been made.

In his article in *Foreign Language Annals,* I (December, 1967), John B. Carroll reported that in a nation-wide testing program conducted in 1965, of proficiency levels attained by college majors in a foreign language, "Time spent abroad is clearly one of the most potent variables we have found. . . ." A few high school programs are making efforts to measure changes in attitudes and language skills which have resulted from foreign study and travel. One such program is Indiana University's Honors Program in Foreign Languages for High School Students. This is a carefully organized and highly selective program, with almost all the time in the foreign country spent in one location for serious language study. Administrators of this program have used the *MLA Foreign Language Classroom Tests* in an effort to determine whether students make significant gains in language skills as a result of participating; *An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Indiana University Honors Program in Foreign Languages for High School Students,* an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, written at Indiana University by John B. Jantzen in 1968, presents the results of these evaluations. More such studies are needed.

Where Things Are Happening

As has been suggested at the beginning of this report, both the number of high school foreign study programs and the number of students involved are increasingly rapidly. At the same time, fortunately, there is reason to believe that standards of preparation are being raised in some programs. We can do better, however, and if we are to protect the possibility of foreign study for high school students in future years, we must do better.

An effort is presently being made to establish high school foreign study opportunities, available to outstanding students throughout the country. This program is sponsored by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and organized in cooperation with the Council on International Exchange (CIEE).* Now in the organizational stages, the program plans to be in operation in the summer of 1970; it will include participants nominated by every state constituent association of ACTFL.

In addition, ACTFL's Study Abroad Committee plans to establish at its headquarters a list of programs whose administrators agree to permit unannounced inspections of their study sites, who agree to answer a number of searching questions concerning their objectives, manner of staff selection, criteria for student participation, and financial status, and who allow former staff personnel and student participants to report on their experiences in the program.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As long as our society grows more affluent, and it becomes more and more the "thing to do" for high school students to travel abroad, and as long as operating foreign study tours can be lucrative, the foreign language teaching profession must help students, parents, and school personnel to examine existing programs carefully, and to organize new ones deliberately and well.

ACTFL plans to take part in this endeavor by establishing well-run model programs, and by setting up the positive kind of evaluation already suggested. Careful, painstaking work of this kind should, in time, enable students to begin in high school the all-important task of effectively representing the best traditions of the United States in her relationships with the rest of the world.

APPENDIX A

ADVISORY AGENCIES AND RESOURCES

Two sources from which interested persons may get additional information are listed here.

A. CIEE, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, offers descriptions of programs, complete transportation services and information, and help on nearly any aspect of foreign study and travel. A *bona fide* non-profit organization which provides a useful *List of Publications*.

B. ACTFL, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. Study Abroad Committee Chairman, Professor M. Phillip Leamon, Head, Foreign Language Education, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306.

APPENDIX B

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING FOREIGN STUDY PROGRAMS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Reprinted from *Foreign Language Annals*, I, 4 (May 1968),
published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

[The following statement was prepared by Stephen A. Freeman, Director of the Language Schools at Middlebury College. It was adopted by the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) in 1966. The ACTFL Executive Committee, with prior agreement by NCSSFL, adopted these criteria at its 4-5 February 1968 meeting as the Council's first official policy statement. Individual members of ACTFL will be selected to apply the criteria to a number of programs during 1968 for the purpose of refining the criteria and promoting their use. The Executive Committee considers it a privilege for ACTFL to cooperate with one of its Affiliates in this critical area of concern to foreign language teachers and students.]

This Council recognizes the very great value of foreign travel and study. The contact with a foreign culture, when properly prepared and guided, can be a personal experience of the greatest importance, broaden-

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*For addresses and further information about ACTFL and CIEE, see Appendix A.

ing the individual's cultural horizon and leading him to a better understanding of other peoples. Study abroad, when properly prepared and conducted, can be an enriching intellectual experience, advancing the person's knowledge of various subjects in ways not possible at home. The Council therefore encourages and supports the programs of high quality which make available to secondary school students these valuable experiences.

At the same time, the Council is alarmed by the rapid proliferation of so-called "study" programs offered by hundreds of organizations, private, commercial, or "non-profit," which take advantage of the tremendous popularity of foreign travel. The chief objective of many of them seems to be to enroll the largest possible number of persons, without regard for quality, selectivity, preparation, or effective academic control. Such programs are widely advertised, create an attractive image of affiliation with the foreign academic community, and appeal to teachers as a way to get a free trip abroad.

Confronted by the deluge of publicity, the students, their parents, conscientious teachers, and school administrators are seeking guidance. They propose that some organization should "accredit" the acceptable programs. This does not seem feasible at present, partly because of the limited information available, its constantly changing nature, the inevitable omissions, and partly because it would be unwise to publish a blacklist or any statement equivalent to it.

It is essential and urgent, however, that some method be devised to assist interested persons in evaluating a certain program, its quality and suitability for a given objective. A set of clear and simple criteria can serve as guidelines, clarifying the essentials of a high-quality program, and as warning signals when further questions need to be asked before a student enrolls or even applies for enrollment. This is a highly complex matter, and "yes" or "no" answers are not always possible. Yet in the present dangerous situation, American high-school teachers and administrators must become much more critical and discriminating, on the basis of information which they should secure, before permitting our teenagers to become involved in the risk of an unfortunate experience.

The Council therefore suggests the following Criteria for Evaluating Foreign Study Programs for High School Students.

I. Sponsorship

A. What kind of organization operates the program?

1. Academic: a degree-granting college or university; a public high school; a private secondary school. These are usually responsible to some accrediting agency, and try to maintain quality for the sake of their own students. They may accept outsiders.

2. Religious: church organizations, or fellowships, or orders; usually for some type of charitable service abroad rather than study. Admission is often restricted, highly selective, and the objectives are limited.

3. Private educational: includes everything from reputable agencies like The Experiment in International Living, the Council on Student Travel, and the American Field Service, to anonymous agencies operating out of a post office box number. The term "non-profit" signifies little in this context. Many of these agencies style themselves "Schools" or "Institutes"; many have university people on their boards of directors; other have no board of directors. The greatest problems and dangers lie in this category, since these private agencies are answerable only to themselves. Some are good; some are downright dishonest.

4. Commercial: travel agencies, steamship, and airlines. These concern themselves chiefly with transportation and tours, leaving the study program to some agency abroad, such as Summer Courses for Foreigners at a university. Usually, little academic supervision is provided.

B. The reputation and responsibility of the sponsoring organization should be checked in the following ways:

1. Careful reading of the "fine print" in the advertising matter, noting length of experience; amount of direct control abroad; quality of its academic Board of Advisors; methods of recruiting; vague statements or exaggerated claims; etc.

2. Inquiries addressed to educators or advisors named in the advertising, especially if they are known to you. Beware of vague generalizing "recommendations" of the value of foreign travel.

3. Inquiries addressed to parents of students who have participated in former years. Insist on getting a list with addresses.

4. Check with leaders or chaperones of former years, especially those in your vicinity, about their experience.

5. Make a confidential request for information, by phone, to the Supervisor of Foreign Languages in your State Education Department.

6. Apply carefully the following criteria for evaluation of the program.

II. Recruitment and Selection of Students

A. Does the program accept *any* student who applies and pays the fees? This is the clearest danger signal of a low-quality program. Not every high school student is fit or ready for a summer abroad, in a group, away from parents, and at least partially unsupervised. An approvable program must show *selectivity*, on the basis of:

1. Character, maturity, dependability, self-control, adaptability.
2. A good school record, good citizenship, above-average grades.
3. Some knowledge of the foreign country, its language, and culture.
4. Absence of physical or psychological disabilities or handicaps.

B. Homogeneous grouping. Are students of all ages and levels of social maturity placed in the same group? If so, problems are inevitable.

III. Selection of the Group Leader (Director-Chaperone)

A. Does any person who recruits a certain number of students become the chaperone of the group? This is another common danger signal. The signal becomes clearer when the person receives a free trip for this recruiting, and an added bonus for each additional recruit. It may be claimed that the chaperone can handle better a group which he knows personally. Nevertheless, not every person is fitted to be the leader-chaperone of a study group abroad.

B. The selection of the leader-chaperone should be entirely separate from recruitment or financial considerations, and should be based upon the following qualifications:

1. A mature adult, enough older than the group to command its respect; skilled in handling teenagers; wise, understanding, resourceful. He replaces the parent.
2. Some familiarity with the foreign country, its culture and mores.
3. Considerable fluency in the foreign language.
4. A willingness to devote nearly his entire time to the group. He should not expect to pursue studies or research of his own.

IV. Study

A. A definition of the objective of the program is of first importance. Travel-tours of foreign countries, if wisely conducted, can be highly educational. Home-stays, i.e., living with selected families, can be an enriching personal experience.

B. Neither of these is *study*. The confusion of travel and cultural contact with study is the cause of many problems. Study, especially if it is to be counted for academic "credit" by the home school, must be genuine intellectual effort in a specific body of knowledge, with reading, exercises, discussions; controlled and validated by tests and reports equivalent to those expected at home. The following questions arise.

1. Where will the student study? Many programs speak deceptively of study in a foreign university, under university professors. Foreign universities are closed in summer; and do not accept high-school students. The truth is that students may be enrolled in Special Courses for Foreigners, or be taught by specially hired assistants in the otherwise empty classrooms.

2. What will the student study? Good courses in the foreign language, literature, and civilization are available for students at the intermediate level in the language. They should not go abroad to *begin* the foreign language. If courses in history, fine arts, social studies, etc., are promised, they will probably be taught in English.

3. Will the classes be homogeneous? Are proficiency tests in the foreign language given? Or will students of all levels of preparation, in the language and in the subject matter, be thrown together? This is a common fault of small groups. One result is that students talk English to each other all the time.

4. What academic control will there be? Foreign universities have no attendance rules. The American student quickly learns to "cut" classes, thus disrupting the instruction schedule. Attendance, written exercises, final examinations, equivalence of American grades and "credits"–all of these depend on the effective supervision of the American program director. Who is he? What experience does he have? Is he in continuous charge of the group?

5. If travel is mixed with study, when is it done–before, after, or on weekends? What is the proportion of each? Which gets the most attention? Does the travel serve to illustrate the study, or is it a separate feature? Do the class teachers accompany the group?

V. Living Abroad

A. Housing. Will the students live and take their meals in an empty university or secondary school dormitory? This is usually what is meant by "on the university campus." Will the chaperones live in the dormitory with them, or what supervision will the students get? Under these arrangements, the students talk English most of the time and have little or no contact with the foreign culture.

Or will the students live with families? How are they selected? Families willing to take student boarders in summer are scarce, and only the best programs have an adequate list of good families (not merely boardinghouses). This arrangement is more successful in the provinces and small towns.

B. Social Life and "free time." How "free" can an American teenager abroad for the first time be permitted to be? The different customs and mores, including boy-girl relationships and the drinking of wine and beer, the culture shock, even homesickness, greatly increase the need for the constant presence of a wise and understanding counselor, not merely a "chaperone."

A clear danger signal in any high-school age program is the statement that the participants will have large segments of "free time" to explore the foreign culture "on their own."

VI. Financial

A. Enrollment. Is an application fee, non-refundable or only partially refundable, required with your application? If so, it is evidence that there is no selectivity, and you are buying blindly.

B. Travel. Do the basic fees cover all transportation expenses, or only the plane from New York to Paris, leaving you to pay transportation to the location of the program, plus innumerable costs such as taxis, buses, meals, and tips en route?

C. Travel Tours. Are tours included in the "study" program, and how many, of what duration? Are the costs of tours before, after, or weekends included in the basic fee or are they "extras"? Read the "fine print." The extras may make a very expensive total. Are the tours properly chaperoned and expertly conducted? "Free time" on a tour often means unguided, inefficient use of the time, especially for a teenager abroad for the first time.

D. Insurance. Is medical, accident, and baggage insurance included in the plan? Just what does it cover, in what amounts, and what does it cost? It is folly to go without it.

VII. Conclusion. *Caveat Emptor.*

Any reputable organization offering a program of study abroad has a reputation to build and to maintain. It cannot dictate terms to the American public, nor refuse to answer legitimate questions. Our basic advice in the whole situation is therefore: Be on your guard; be skeptical; ask questions until you are satisfied; do not enroll or pay any money until then. And after you return from abroad, tell others of your experience and evaluate it honestly.